



SACRED CIRCLE DAILY REPORT



DAY 1: August 17, 2015

MEMORY KEEPERS

Jeffery Stanley,
Caledonia

Maria Jane Highway,
Brandon

NUMBERS OF NOTE

160

The number of registrants for the 8th Anglican Sacred Circle, including:

- representation from 18 dioceses
- 13 partners (bishops, ecumenical or non-indigenous)
- 9 members of the Primate's Commission on Discovery, Reconciliation and Justice
- 1 member of COGS
- 12 national office staff
- 3 international guests (Sweden, New Zealand and USA – Navajo nation).

WEATHER

Hot and humid, with a lake breeze

Lighting of the Sacred Fire

The 8th Sacred Circle commenced at 6:30 a.m. with a sunrise ceremony including the lighting of the sacred fire. The fire keeper, Steve Darden, Dine from Navajoland, encouraged youth and others present to assist in the traditional method of lighting the fire by rubbing sticks. After 4 to 5 hours of hard work the sacred fire was burning brightly.

The fire remains lit for the duration of the event to ensure the spirits and teachings guide and protect participants. It will be extinguished at the conclusion of the conference on Friday evening.

Colour and culture

Sacred Circle members put on their finest regalia and traditional costumes for today's procession to the Eucharist. There were ribbon shirts, elaborate beadwork, traditional headdress, moccasins, and more.

"The opening ceremony was powerful. Churches in urban settings often do not allow First Nations regalia to be worn as a vestment. I had never seen that and it was awesome!" said one memory keeper.

Sacred Circle Daily Report — Day One

Communities in crisis

In his homily at today's Eucharist, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, compared the reading of the day to the Anglican Church's history of assimilation and cultural genocide.

Archbishop Hiltz also stressed the current crisis in many Indigenous communities. Poverty, addiction, high suicide rates and missing and murdered indigenous women are all examples of the problem. This context must be remembered when we read the statement, *Where We Are Today: Twenty Years after the Covenant, an Indigenous Call to the Wider Church*.

Delegates talked about how Archbishop Hiltz' message brought tears to their eyes. Memory keepers were also moved by his message.

"When he was remembering the previous statement, I felt like he was reinforcing the apology by Archbishop Michael Peers. It made me feel very emotional that there is still a lot of work to do."

"It was a very powerful message. I got very emotional when he said Canada was a third world country. They have to make an effort to do something about issues like suicide and poverty. I felt very touched by his words."

The Primate's full address is available at www.anglican.ca/sc2015. Other resources and videos of the day can be found here as well.

Talking Circles resonate

Members gathered in their talking circles for the first time today to talk about the Statement. Groups later reported back to plenary.

Members honoured the amount of work that was put into the making of the document. Some members thought the language should be made stronger.

The memory keepers were particularly moved when the youth group talked about declining indigenous youth membership and pointed out that without the youth there is no future.

Climate Change

Bishop Mark MacDonald, the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, presented the keynote address of the day on climate change. He noted that the people that are least responsible for the problem are the most affected and thought a more appropriate name for the issue might be "climate injustice".

Education

One memory keeper noted that the Sacred Circle ethos must be shared with our communities. "I think this is the most important thing delegates can do. We must educate others in our parishes when we return home."

Prepared by: Bev Murphy,
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